

Classic Poetry Series

**Nina Murdoch**  
**- poems -**

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## Nina Murdoch(1890 - 1976)

The daughter of law clerk John Andrew Murdoch and his wife Rebecca (Murphy), Nina grew up in the small town of Woodburn, NSW. She attended the Sydney Girls' High School from 1904 until 1907, and then taught at the Sydney Boys' Preparatory School.

Nina began writing poetry whilst still at high school and published many of her poems in *The Bulletin* between 1913 - 1922. In 1913 she won the *Bulletin* prize for a sonnet about Canberra. She worked for the *Sydney Sun* and became one of the first women general reporters. She married in 1917.

Nina died in 1976.

# Sing A Song Of War-Time

Sing a Song of War-time,  
Soldiers marching by,  
Crowds of people standing,  
Waving them 'Good-bye',  
When the crowds are over,  
Home we go to tea,  
Bread and margarine to eat,  
War economy!

If I ask for cake or  
Jam of any sort,  
Nurse says, "What, in War-time?  
Archie, cert'nly not!  
Life's not very funny  
Now, for little boys,  
Haven't any money.  
Can't buy any toys.

Mummie does the housework,  
Can't get any maid,  
Gone to make munitions,  
'Cause they're better paid,  
nurse is always busy,  
never time to play,  
sewing shirts for soldiers,  
nearly ev'ry day.

Ev'ry body's doing  
Something for the War,  
Girls are doing things,  
They've never done before.  
Go as 'bus conductors,  
Drive a car or van,  
All the world is topsy-turvy  
Since the War began.

Nina Murdoch

# The Braemar Road

The road that leads to Braemar winds ever in and out.  
It wanders here and dawdles there, and trips and turns about  
Like a child upon an errand that play has put to rout.  
By the road that leads to Braemar, the greybeard poplars stand,  
And on the sky's pale tapestry are broidered in a band  
With the flashing frosty needle that gleams in winter's hand.  
There are haggard apple-orchards on either side the way,  
That once flung scented largesse to every summer's day  
To mingle with the incense where hot pine-needles lay.  
And down the road's long vista the shadows spread like wings  
As lightly spun and purple as the shade the evening brings  
For circling children's eyelids round with mystic drowsy rings.  
The ruddy road to Braemar all weather-worn and brown,  
Goes tumbling on its journey until it nears the town.  
Then with glory of the wattle-bloom its arms are weighted down!  
Oh, the long, long road to anywhere seems haply without end,  
But who shall call it weary with the love of some good friend  
To greet him like the wattle as he turns the final bend!

Nina Murdoch

# Warbrides

There has been wrong done since the world began.  
That young men should go out and die in war,  
And lie face down in the dust for a brief span,  
And be not good to look at anymore.

It is the old men with their crafty eyes  
And greedy fingers and their feeble lungs,  
Make mischief in the world and are called wise,  
And bring war on us with their garrulous tongues.

It is the old men hid in secret rooms,  
Feign wisdom while they sign our peace away,  
And turn fair meadows into reeking tombs,  
And passionate bridegrooms into bloodied clay.

It is the old men should be sent to fight!  
The old men grown so wise they have forgot  
The touch of mouth on mouth in the still of night,  
The tenderness that wedded lovers wot;

The dreams that dwell in the eyes of a young bride;  
The secret beauty of things said and done;  
The hope of children coming, and the pride  
Of little homes and gardens in the sun.

It is the old men who have nought to lose,  
And nought to pray for but their gasping breath,  
Should bear this ill of the world, and so choose  
Out of their beds to meet their master, Death.

This is the bitterest wrong the world wide,  
That young men on the battlefield should rot,  
And I be widowed who was scarce a bride,  
While prattling old men sit at ease and plot.

Nina Murdoch